

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1 – 29 (cancelled)

30. (Currently amended) A gelatin-free soft caramel comprising a soft caramel base mass that contains at least one polysaccharide hydrocolloid selected from the group consisting of gum arabic, gellan gum, guar gum, cellulose gum, carob seed gum, tamarind seed gum, tara gum, gum tragacanth, xanthan gum, agar, alginate, carrageenan, konjac, pectin, pullulan, starch, and a mixture thereof as texturing agent, a crystalline sweetener phase which is isomaltulose, and a noncrystalline sweetener phase, wherein the caramel is gelatin-free, wherein the isomaltulose is the only crystalline sweetener present in the caramel, and wherein the noncrystalline sweetener phase of the soft caramel base mass is formed of maltitol syrup, polydextrose or hydrogenated starch hydrolysate or a mixture of two or three thereof, and the caramel is sucrose-free and gelatin-free.

31. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim [[30]] 62, where the polysaccharide hydrocolloid is selected from the group consisting of gum arabic, gellan gum, guar gum, cellulose gum, carob seed gum, tamarind seed gum, tara gum, gum tragacanth, xanthan gum, agar, alginate, carrageenan, konjac, pectin, pullulan, a starch, a modified starch and a mixture thereof.

32. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim [[31]] 30, where the polysaccharide is a mixture of gum arabic and gellan gum in a ratio from 5:1 to 15:1.

33. (Previously Presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 32, where gum arabic and gellan gum are present in a ratio from 5:1 to 15:1.

34. (Canceled)

35. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~[[31]] 30~~, where the noncrystalline sweetener phase of the soft caramel base mass is formed of glucose syrup or starch hydrolyzate or both.

36. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~[[31]] 30~~, where the soft caramel base mass comprises one or more intensive sweeteners.

37. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramels as in Claim 36, where the intensive sweetener is selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose.

38. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~[[31]] 30~~, where the soft caramel base mass contains 2 to 15% fat.

39. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~[[31]] 30~~, where the soft caramel base mass contains at least one emulsifier.

40. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 31, where the soft caramel base mass contains a positive amount up to 5% of at least one protein component.

41. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~[[40]] 38~~, where the protein component comprises milk protein.

42. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~[[31]] 30~~, where the soft caramel base mass contains one or more natural or synthetic food dyes.

43. (Previously Presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 42, where the food dye is selected from the group consisting of chlorophyll, a chlorophyllin, carmine red, alura red,  $\beta$ -carotene, a riboflavin, an anthocyan, betanine, erythrosine, indigo carmine, tartrazine or titanium dioxide.

44. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~[[31]] 30~~, where the soft caramel base mass contains flavorings and flavoring agents.

45. (Previously Presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 44, where the flavorings and flavoring agents are selected from the group consisting of essential oils, synthetic flavorings, fruit essences, eucalyptus, peppermint oil, menthol and acids.

46. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~[[31]] 30~~, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 5 to 14% water.

47. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 46, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 6 to 12% water.

48. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 46, where the soft caramel base mass contains flavorings and flavoring agents [']; at least one emulsifier; at least one intensive sweetener is selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose; and 2 to 15% fat; ~~and where the polysaccharide hydrochloride is selected from the group consisting of gum arabic, gellan gum, guar gum, cellulose gum, carob seed gum, tamarind seed gum, tara gum, gum tragacanth, xanthan gum, agar, alginate, carrageenan, konjac, pectin, pullulan, a starch, a modified starch and a mixture thereof.~~

49. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~[[31]]~~ 30, where the soft caramel base mass additionally comprises at least one medicinal active agent.

50. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 49, where the medicinal active agent is selected from the group consisting of dextromethorphan, hexylresorcinol/menthol, phenylpropanolamine, dyclonine, menthol eucalyptus, benzocaine and cetylpyridinium.

51 - 60. (Canceled)

61. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim ~~49~~ 69, wherein the medicinal active agent is selected from the group consisting of dextromethorphan, hexylresorcinol/menthol, phenylpropanolamine, dyclonine, menthol eucalyptus, benzocaine and cetylpyridinium.

62. (New) A gelatin-free soft caramel comprising a soft caramel base mass comprising polydextrose, at least one polysaccharide hydrocolloid as texturing agent, a crystalline sweetener phase which is isomaltulose, and a noncrystalline sweetener phase, wherein the caramel is gelatin-free, the isomaltulose is the only crystalline sweetener present in the caramel, and wherein the caramel is sucrose-free and gelatin-free.

63. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the polysaccharide is a mixture of gum arabic and gellan gum.

64. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 63, where gum arabic and gellan gum are present in a ratio from 5:1 to 15:1.

65. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the soft caramel base mass comprises one or more intensive sweeteners.

66. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 65, comprises one or more intensive sweeteners selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine,

aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose.

67. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the soft caramel base mass contains 2 to 15% fat.

68. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 5 to 14% water.

69. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 68, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 6 to 12% water.

70. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the soft caramel base mass additionally comprises at least one medicinal active agent.

71. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the soft caramel base mass contains flavorings and flavoring agents; at least one emulsifier; at least one intensive sweetener selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose; 2 to 15% fat; and where the polysaccharide hydrochloride is selected from the group consisting of gum arabic, gellan gum, guar gum, cellulose gum, carob seed gum, tamarind seed gum, tara gum, gum tragacanth, xanthan gum, agar, alginate, carrageenan, konjac, pectin, pullulan, a starch, a modified starch and a mixture thereof.